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"More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me."
Commonplace Book

J. J. Thomson's 1929 Letter Resurfaces

M. D. ALLEN
University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley

Close readers of Pierre Coustillas' biography will perhaps recollect the name of J. J. Thomson, which appears twice in the first volume (pp. 70 and 88-89). Thomson is a source for Gissing's time at Owens College, recording an interesting tidbit about his winning the English Poem Prize with "Ravenna": "[Gissing's] contemporary . . . Joseph John Thomson, physicist and Nobel prize winner, remembered in his *Recollections and Reflections* [that] he heard his professor, A. W. Ward, announce at the annual meeting in June 1873 that Gissing 'had written a very rare thing, a prize poem that was real poetry'" (70). But, more significantly, Thomson was privy to events immediately following Gissing's arrest: invited to dinner by the College's Principal, Dr. Greenwood, Thomson saw his host arrive late and visibly distressed, having just bailed out his star pupil.

Coustillas quotes (p. 89) from what, until recently, was the only surviving part of a letter written by Thomson on 27 February, 1929 to a certain Hamish Miles. By then J. J. Thomson (b. 1856) was a distinguished man indeed. He had entered Owens in 1870, then in 1876 moved on to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he continued his studies and eventually began to teach; by 1884 he was Professor of Physics. He became Master of Trinity in 1918 and remained there until his death in 1940. Awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1906, in part for his discovery of the electron, he was knighted in 1908. His son, George Paget Thomson, also won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1937 and seven of his research assistants received Nobel Prizes. He would be buried in Westminster Abbey.

Hamish Miles, more properly James Edward Miles (1894-1937), the recipient of his letter, doubtless contacted Thomson as part of his research into Gissing's life. He completed, or nearly completed, a biography of Gissing that was to be published by Jonathan Cape in 1929 but decided the work was not good enough and suppressed it. He was also the translator of a number of books from the French, a journalist, and one of the best known literary advisors in London. He joined the staff of *The Times* three months before his death. The letter from Thomson came into the possession of Miles' son-in-law, Owen D. Whitney, who published the lines concerning the catastrophe of 1876 in a letter to *The Listener* on 16 January, 1958, headed "Portrait of George Gissing." In the opening paragraph of his letter Whitney writes that Thomson "does substantially confirm the account given by Morley Roberts in *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*."

His concluding lines, after the quotation, remind us how very little was known about the most important events of Gissing's life even in 1958, fifty-five years after his death: "It is significant that the severely edited *Letters of George Gissing to [Members of] his Family* (1927) omits any letters written between May or June and October, 1876 (pages 11-12)—the time when these events took place. Surely also the 'act of dishonesty' accounts for Gissing's departure for America that autumn."

Enter Bruce Garland, a Gissing collector. In early 2014 Garland ordered a copy of a 1915 *Ryecroft* from an English bookseller, who described it as having a letter from a contemporary of Gissing's at Owens College laid in. Garland reports that "the book was cheap and I was especially curious about the identity of the contemporary." Understandably, he was "stunned" to discover that this "contemporary" turned out to be so eminent, and, again understandably, "amazed" that the bookseller had not checked Thomson out.

Here is Thomson's letter to Hamish Miles *in toto*:

Trinity Lodge
Cambridge
Feb. 27.1929

Dear Sir,

I was a contemporary of Gissing at the Owens College though I did not see very much of him as he attended the lectures on the Literary side and I those on the

Scientific and the lecture room was the most usual place for students to meet in those days. He was regarded as the most brilliant literary student the College had had for many years and he carried off many distinctions. I remember he won the Prize Poem on one occasion and at the Prize Giving Sir Adolphus Ward then D[r] Ward said his poem showed that he possessed the true poetic spirit. I remember too in a general way the tragedy in his last year at the College. It was I think in June 1876. D[r] Greenwood then Principal had asked some of the students to dinner, but it was not till long after the time fixed that our host arrived and then he was very much agitated and upset. It turned out afterwards that Gissing should have been at the dinner and that not long before dinner time D[r] Greenwood had been summoned to the Police Court to bail out Gissing who had been arrested on a charge of theft. I am not sure that any account appeared in the newspapers. D[r] Ward who was very influential with the Manchester Guardian I believe either got the report suppressed or put in a very inconspicuous form. He also looked after Gissing when his sentence expired & got work for him on one of the London Evening papers I think the Pall Mall or St. James. I should not like to be responsible for the accuracy of all the details, it is more than 50 years ago & I did not keep a diary.

Yours sincerely

J. J. Thomson

Thomson does make one error, nearly fifty-three years after the event: it was, of course, Frederic Harrison who introduced Gissing to John Morley, then editing the *Pall Mall Gazette.*

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Garland, Bruce. E-mail communications to Pierre and Hélène Coustillas, 27 and 31 March, 2014.

[In compiling this essay I have merely been a conduit for the discoveries and work of others: I am grateful to Bruce Garland for permission to reproduce Thomson's letter; to Pierre Coustillas, whose researches have provided me with all the information about Thomson and Miles above; and to Hélène Coustillas for a reliable transcription of Thomson's letter. MDA]

Marianne Helen Harrison: A Medical Diagnosis

UNA FORSYTH
Southsea, Hampshire

"The cultured person is one who accepts no idea, no statement, without carefully considering its worth, whose mind is not fettered by prejudice on any matter whatever, but who tries on every point to see things in the light of simple reason." (Gissing to Margaret Gissing, 18 June, 1881. Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, 1: 43.)

On 17 May, 1879, Marianne Helen went to stay in Wilmslow with her "brother-in-law," William. It was a

holiday intended to improve the state of her health, and to give George a break from his role of carer. William, no stranger to illness himself, exhibited a marked degree of empathy towards Marianne, providing her with what might have been one of the happiest times of her life.

He writes of Marianne having four episodes of convulsions on the first night (Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas 175), which he attends with his landlady. He subsequently feeds Marianne up—much as the Wells' do with George in 1900 and 1901—for William believes, rightly, that one of the pillars of health is adequate nutrition. The change of environment, tasty food, and free and easy occupation work their magic on Marianne. Not unexpectedly, the fits return when she goes home.

Convulsions are sudden, recurrent episodes of sensory disturbance and loss of consciousness generally associated with abnormal electrical activity in the brain (epilepsysociety.org.uk). A seizure is an embarrassing and frightening event for sufferer and observer alike, with a range of signs that can easily be misread by persons unacquainted with the disorder. Typical seizures present a range of observable behaviours immediately before unconsciousness sets in, known as "fugue state." These can appear quite disturbing to the onlooker. There might be evidence of slurred speech, problems with balance, the appearance of stupefaction, and hallucination-like sensations of touch and sight which upset the sufferer and may result in bizarre reactions to stimuli. In the classic grand mal fit there is sudden collapse often resulting in injury producing bleeding wounds (particularly to the head

region), frequently accompanied by disturbing, frightening, sounds. Unconsciousness follows, then a process of bodily rigidity, uncontrolled thrashing movements, possible incontinence, and tongue-biting with bloody frothing saliva. Clothes may have become torn or dishevelled, embarrassing for all when undergarments or intimate body parts are inadvertently displayed. Seizures of the grand mal type are usually single events, but in 'status epilepticus' (nice.org.uk), the sufferer does not regain consciousness but returns to restart the fit process perhaps several times. This is often a life-threatening situation due to problems with getting enough air to the lungs. Anyone with, for example, underlying lung disease is particularly vulnerable.

On regaining consciousness the person may be confused and disoriented and might exhibit "post-seizure automatism," a situation leading to socially inappropriate behaviours, such as removing clothes or interacting in an uncharacteristically sexually provocative way with strangers. Belligerence and aggression with swearing and shouting are also possible, pre- and post-seizure. More often than not, the ignorant will assume the sufferer is paralytically drunk.

We now know there are many forms of epilepsy that result in a broad range of signs and symptoms. The causes of epilepsy are largely still a mystery, but damage to the brain by injury, infection, genetic abnormality, or environmental factors is often a precursor.

What might have caused Marianne's fits? Some Gissing biographers suggest she suffered from the "great imitator": syphilis. According to Pierre Coustillas, in his *The Heroic Life of George Gissing* (1:5), "The death certificate ascribed the immediate cause of the decease to an acute form of laryngitis, but there is no doubt that Nell succumbed to the combined effects of drink and syphilis." Morley Roberts says, "She died of what I may call, euphemistically, specific laryngitis," whilst subsequently implying the real cause was syphilis. Neither biographer has medical training; neither explains why a doctor would falsify a death certificate for a destitute, loveless nobody by claiming she died of acute or specific laryngitis when she really died of syphilis. Of course, both biographers want their readers to sympathise with George, and so Marianne is sacrificed. If Gissing biographers want Marianne to be worthless, she is termed a whore, and they go to syphilis as their proof; if they need to see her as a corrosive influence on Gissing's creative genius, she is made into a scheming alcoholic. The death certificate—a legal document—did not give alcoholism or venereal disease as cause or *contributory* cause of death, so we must accept that acute laryngitis ended the heroic struggle for Marianne. Acute laryngitis is a specific diagnosis and not to be confused with simple laryngitis. It is sudden in onset, difficult even nowadays to treat, and is still often fatal, particularly for anyone suffering respiratory problems. And, from what we read in Gissing's letters, this diagnosis is entirely consistent with the pattern of Marianne's medical history.

In recording his observations of Marianne's ill-health, Gissing often employs specific terms. In addition to the convulsions, he writes about Marianne's rheumatism, abdominal neuralgia, haemoptysis (spitting blood); tonsillitis, congestion; insomnia; tumours on her arm and face; toothache; "erysipelas-like" facial lesions; confusion; weight loss; delirium; headache; and serious eye problems. Of most significance is the entry for 3 November, 1880. Gissing writes of her in a letter to Algernon: "I hear from her physician she was afflicted when quite a child with a form of scrofula and that still clings in her system" (Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas 1: 306). And, here we have it: the diagnosis—the credible cause of the seizures and that lethal "acute laryngitis."

Scrofula is tuberculous cervical lymphadenitis (emedicine.medscape.com), a disease first presenting as painless lumps that disfigure the skin and tissues of the neck and face. There is usually inflammation of the eyes and nose, anorexia, persistent cough, haemoptysis, tonsillitis, difficulty swallowing, laryngitis, glossitis (inflammation of the tongue), and feverish, nocturnal fretfulness leading to insomnia. Until the discovery of antibiotics, there was nothing that arrested its progress throughout the whole body as it developed into systemic tuberculosis. TB can set up home in any organ: pulmonary tuberculosis (phthisis) afflicts lungs; Pott's disease affects the spine, the pain from which could present as rheumatism or pain in the loins, hips, and knees. TB affects the liver, the kidneys, and the heart, causing a type of potentially fatal heart condition termed pericardial tamponade (George himself may have succumbed to this

form of TB). And then there is the brain form of TB, causing headaches, organic and functional brain disorder leading to seizures, behavioural changes, and problems with bodily systems malfunctioning. Scrofula, usually contracted in childhood, can lie dormant during adolescence, only to re-emerge in immune-suppressed persons in early adulthood. Poor nutrition, psychological stress, environmental factors, and exposure to viruses and infections can cause immune-suppression.

In Marianne's time, treatment for scrofula was ineffectual, bordering on the iatrogenic. Toxic substances such as antimony, mercury, baryta (bromide), hemlock, belladonna, and opium were prescribed. Ironically, even in the eighteenth century, these toxic substances were known to produce seizures and neurological damage (Phillips). There was the option of surgery to remove the disfiguring pustules but this was often ill advised as surgical intervention was known to carry the risk of spreading the disease to other organs (Kent).

Marianne's end in abject misery is attributed by some Gissing biographers to innate, feckless self-indulgence on her part, but this is grossly inaccurate and unfair. Marianne died of the complications of scrofula contracted in childhood; it ruined her chances of a healthy, happy life and that surely demands she be accorded some compassion. I feel sure William Gissing, Marianne's true friend, would have agreed with that.

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Another Gissing Dissertation

Congratulations to Dr. Ying Ying, who completed a dissertation on Gissing at Zhejiang University, P. R. China, in 2013. It is entitled "The Writer's Crisis of Survival in George Gissing's Works," and was written under the supervision of Professor Qiping Yin:

My dissertation examines the writer's crisis of survival in four of Gissing's works that bring the subject into its sharpest focus. It argues that an unprecedented crisis of survival that writers encounter in the late nineteenth century finds an abundant manifestation and a profound investigation in Gissing's works in a delicate and effective way through a set of imagery that has rarely attracted critical attention but has a profound bearing on the issue concerned. Gissing's works expose an intensified crisis to such an extent that the writer's survival is hardly to be secured, and disclose that the crisis has its roots in the late nineteenth-century literary field, which undergoes a crucial transformation in its scale and structure and, in essence, becomes one with low autonomy. Meanwhile, how the writer protagonists respond to the crisis is of equal significance in Gissing's works. Though reading optimism into Gissing still remains a minority approach, this dissertation, based on the research work of a few Gissing scholars, adopts a cultural perspective to discover sanguine responses to the crisis that are concealed beneath the surface of despair. Following eminent Victorian thinkers and brilliant German philosophers, the writer protagonists endeavour to overcome the crisis by way of changing the lives both of writers and readers. These responses provide a promising

vision of countering the impact of the crisis at a turning point of cultural transformation.

Book Reviews

Christine Huguet and Simon J. James, eds. *George Gissing and the Woman Question: Convention and Dissent.* Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

Christine Huguet and Simon J. James are to be congratulated on bringing together the essays for this volume, each of which sheds new light on a central and defining preoccupation of Gissing's work—his representation of female experience at a period of unprecedented uncertainty about women's economic, social, and cultural roles. Huguet and James claim in their Introduction that Gissing is "allowed to benefit from the exciting aura of transgression surrounding his time . . . which witnessed so many changes in the sexual climate" (8). This volume successfully addresses "a sustained interest in the unorthodox and multifaceted characteristics of [Gissing's] examinations of sexual behaviour" (8). Immaculately edited, *George Gissing and the Woman Question* deserves to become a standard work of reference for Gissing scholars and for students of the literary and cultural history of late nineteenth-century Britain.

The editors have organised the chapters in this volume into two sections: "Gissing's Complex Discourse of (New) Womanhood" and "Gissing's Voice: A Comparative

Assessment." These categories, understandably, overlap somewhat: the comparativist perspective of the second grouping is partially adopted by Anthony Patterson, whose essay appears in the first group. The volume fans out in its later chapters to embrace the work of other writers who are Gissing's contemporaries, or near-contempories, such as Theodore Dreiser, Ella Hepworth Dixon, Paul Bourget, and May Sinclair. But perhaps the most instructive presence throughout the volume is that of Zola, who offers significant points of comparison with Gissing for several contributors.

Gissing's radical/conservative views of prostitution and how these shaped his representation of the figure of the prostitute in his first two novels are the subject of David Grylls's essay "Gissing and Prostitution." Through illuminating comparison of the 1884 and 1895 editions of *The Unclassed*, Grylls explicates Gissing's turn to a pronounced antipathy towards prostitution in the 1890s, away from his youthful idealism (mixing compassion and desire). Grylls notes the "pioneering boldness" of his representation of Carrie Mitchell in *Workers in the Dawn*, and Ida Starr, of the 1884 edition of *The Unclassed*. A sign of that "boldness" is the process of "mutual reclamation" in *The Unclassed*, as the prostitute, Ida, rescued by Waymark, in turn "reclaims Waymark from cynicism" (16). Grylls helpfully shows that Gissing's own views of prostitution were heavily influenced by his "youthful reading" (22-3), which traded on conventional tropes that became well established in Victorian writing, including attention to a woman's hair as a moral and erotic signifier. Grylls tracks this motif in Gissing's work in some detail,

reminding us that the appearance of "disordered hair was a traditional symbol of abandonment" (24). Grylls goes on to show that in Gissing's 1890s work the idea of prostitution is metaphorically extended to the condition of the writer in thrall to the marketplace, and for the oppressed condition of women in marriage (26). In this regard he cites a fascinating, little-known, insight from John Middleton Murry for whom some of Gissing's later female figures "surrender" to men "on terms: the condition being economic security" (qtd. in Grylls 27).

The personality of Nell Harrison, for whose reclamation Gissing paid such a heavy price, owes much to Morley Roberts's dubious, yet influential *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* in which, as Roger Milbrandt reminds us, the female protagonist, Marion Hilton, based on Nell, "is a pathetic, even despicable person—an inveterate alcoholic" (59). But the Nell that emerges from Milbrandt's examination of the eighty-six letters written between George and his brothers, William and Algernon, that make specific reference to her is "a normal young woman suffering from an astonishing variety of illnesses. . . . [who] is accorded esteem within a basically wholesome emotional economy she shares with her husband and his brothers" (67). Here is a woman who enjoys writing and reading poetry, and who can offer her brothers-in-law practical advice. Whilst Nell was evidently "by the end of her life . . . a struggling alcoholic" (66), Milbrandt's expert medical sources suggest that her blood-spitting, abcesses, and fits indicated symptoms of a serious condition—"tuberculosis of the central nervous system." Overall,

Milbrandt does a very efficient job with the available evidence of presenting Nell as "a person, not a case" (67).

In Constance Harsh's view Gissing possesses a "notable capacity for imaginative sympathy for women" (29). In her lucid discussion of his female protagonists of the 1890s novels *The Emancipated*, *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women*, and *In the Year of Jubilee*, she traces the condition of their subjecthood to "sexual desire," a "particular construction of modernity," and the performance of "masculine authority" (35). One of her more arresting points is that these protagonists, notably Marian Yule in *New Grub Street*, are "serious analysts of their world" (31), Gissing allowing them "the responsibility for articulating the point of view of the narrative" (31). Yet, at the same time, she notes "a delicate dynamic" (36) of male–female relationships founded on male passivity and the inadequacy of male authority, which "opens up a space for female protagonists" (35). Marian, she argues, "offers a perspective outside the drama of male power, for she does not depend on assertiveness for her identity in the same way male characters do" (38).

One arena for Marian's agency might be that of her own literary production and the validation of selfhood that it might bring, but Maria Teresa Chialant's chapter, "Women of Letters," reminds us that "Marian is not much interested in writing" (164). That Marian is disabled from achieving such an aim is critically significant for Chialant since New Woman novels of the 1890s, in particular, Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894), do allow the female protagonist to achieve a measure of

independence through pursuing her vocation as writer or artist. Whereas women readers abound in his work, Chialant points out, justly, that '[e]xcept in *New Grub Street* there are few women writers in Gissing" (158) and even here "the female characters' literary ambitions and achievements are rather peripheral to the plot and their narrative function is only complementary" (160) to those of the men.

Arguing, plausibly, that Hepworth Dixon was probably influenced by *New Grub Street*, and so was in a position to fill the perceived lacuna opened by Marian's unwillingness to take on the mantle of a serious writer, the figure of the principled writer, Mary Erle in *The Story of a Modern Woman*, retrospectively points up Marian's limited ambtions for herself. In Chialant's view Marian succumbs "to personal failure" (167), caring (understandably, in my view) "more for love than for a literary career" (161).

Men who "experience troubled or failed masculinity" (41) are the subjects of Tara MacDonald's chapter, which focusses on the presentation of Everard Barfoot and Edmund Widdowson in *The Odd Women* as exemplars of the "painful processes of sexual and social transformation at the late century" (47). In the case of Everard she notes a foreshortening of the "journey of union between New Man and New Woman" (54), indicated by his opting for "sexual and social security" (with Agnes Brissenden) (53), decisively cutting short his performance of "new manhood" (54): such an idea remains "largely a concept of the future in 1893" (55). In the case of Widdowson,

MacDonald notes how he briefly envisages (in Chapter 16, "Health from the Sea"), a "utopian, feminist dream" (48) of marital equality, but then cannot face the confusion he feels about the complexities of marriage as he retreats into his role as manager of women. This careful reading of Gissing's presentation of Widdowson helps us to understand why the claim on our attention of this unappealing figure might extend beyond his remit to endorse and enforce the idea of "separate spheres" for men and women.

The Odd Women is also the focus of Cristina Ceron's engaging analysis of how an awareness of literary conventions and plots influences the terms in which characters address each other in the novel. Everard and Rhoda nurture an "unspoken agreement not to be trapped by literary conventions" in wishing to "experience a genuine and modern relationship" (123). For Ceron, Rhoda, who questions her ideal of independence at the point at which she is willing to be courted by Everard, re-evaluates "herself and Everard in terms of . . . two narratives she thought she knew by heart, but whose ending she is no longer able to foresee rationally" (122). Rhoda's sensitivity to the plotting of her own romance is of course intended to recall her trenchant views on the pervasiveness of "love" in conventional fiction which constitutes the "vulgar" "ideal of novelists" (ch. 6). Ceron cites Rhoda's well-known early diatribe, but might have extended the novel's critique of the language of sentimental romance to say more about the effusive insincerities of the pathetic Bevis who presents a spectacle of what Gissing's narrator calls "dolorous sentimentality"

(ch. 22). Not everyone might agree with Ceron's claim that chapters 25 and 26, in which Gissing dismantles the very romance he creates, are the "crucial chapters" of the novel (124). The ironic pairing of chapters 10 and 11 ("First Principles"/"At Nature's Bidding") offers an equally suggestive, if oblique, commentary on the incompatibility between theory and practice—central as it is to an understanding of Rhoda's own predicament, as well as to Monica Madden's.

Gissing's now most-studied novel can, of course, be read as a response to the discursive presence in journalism, from the late 1880s, of the "surplus women" question and the issues of employment and economic function associated with this hitherto under-reported social formation. The "odd women" who "often remained at the sidelines of the late Victorian novel" (83) are the focus of Emma Liggins's survey of those stories of Gissing that deal with the unmarried female figure and her position in the labour market (71). Liggins shows how "the limitations of women's choices between marriage and paid work" are performed in stories such as "At High Pressure," "A Foolish Virgin" (one of Gissing's best-known stories), "Comrades at Arms," and "Miss Rodney's Leisure." Liggins's attention to the short stories (one of two excellent essays on the short fiction in this collection) valuably builds on the recent work on Gissing's short stories by Barbara Rawlinson and others and contributes to recent scholarship on the *fin de siècle* short story that has examined how this marginal genre illuminates the fugitive presence of women's authentic experience at the turn of the century. Liggins's expert knowledge of this

landscape is reflected in commentary on stories which appeared in periodicals as various as *The Yellow Book*, *The Sketch*, and *The Idler* (she is adept at supplying the publishing context) and in identifying examples from Gissing's later output that produced "a more positive version of the energetic spinster" (78).

Reading Rosemary Jann's lucid chapter "Domesticity and Disruption in Gissing's Short Fiction" is to be reminded of how well Gissing was attuned to issues of class and status anxiety and their fundamental role in the experience of domestic life. Given Gissing's "complicated attitudes towards domesticity" (99), his stories give convincing narrativised shape to what Gissing himself was all too conscious of—the increasing destabilation of relations between masters and servants in late nineteenth-century Britain. Through careful readings of "The Tyrant's Apology," "Joseph," "The Foolish Virgin," and "The Prize Lodger," among others, Jann shows how "housekeeping and domestic decorum provide the pivot for . . . [their plots] as well as a significant means for policing the borders of class" (94). Gissing can dramatise, as no one else, the collision between "educated but impoverished middle-class women," who "deserve" servants and "can't afford them," and lower-middle-class women "who consider themselves above housework" and who "keep servants as part of social pretensions that they lack the intrinsic class superiority to support" (99).

Victorian domestic ideology, for Jann, "enjoined self-restraint in manners, speech and public conduct" (86). The desirability of these values for Gissing and the spectacle of

their transgression in the form of female, working-class violence in *The Nether World*, is the subject of Anthony Patterson's suggestive essay. In fact, these two essays creatively play off each other, since Patterson, like Jann, identifies a key binary in Gissing's work in which working-class violence is presented as the "other" of a widely endorsed, middle-class "culture of refinement" (103). Moreover, Gissing "projects generic fears of female violence onto lower-class women" (111). Patterson shows how this ellision of class and gender is manifested in the contrast between the "destructive energy" of Clem Peckover and the "feminine graces" of Jane Snowden. Clem can be seen as the "other of both patriarchal idealizations of femininity and male middle-class identification of cultural refinement" (115).

Building on recent work by John Carter Wood on violence and crime, Patterson points to a Foucauldian "explosion of discourses surrounding violence," so that "opposition to ideas of working-class violence" becomes central to the "formation of a new middle-class identity, demarcated, in part, by its strident opposition to brutality" (103). Instructively, Patterson compares Gissing's representation of female violence with Zola's more erotically explicit handling in *L'Assommoir*. A key point of difference (helping to explain why the novel is not a straightforward work of naturalism) is Gissing's substantial investment in upholding the "cultural boundary between middle-class refinement and working-class violence" (106) through the agency of the "culturally refined narrator"(106)—quite absent in Zola. "[T]hrough class and gender demarcations," Patterson concludes, "Gissing's novel

subscribed to idealist aesthetics sufficiently to avoid the kind of moral censure given to other realist writers such as Zola" (116).

Zola's *L'Assommoir* also provides a more elaborate, comparative framework for Debbie Harrison's informed investigation of Gissing's challenge to conventional representations of the female alcoholic in *The Nether World*. Helpfully locating her analysis within the discourses on alcoholism of the period, Harrison judges that Gissing's "sensitive portrayal of the tormented mind of the alcoholic and of those predisposed to the condition" (131) compares favourably with Zola's "somewhat two-dimensional" versions of the "addicted personae" of Gervaise Macquart and Coupeau (131). While the novel records "urban poverty in all its brutality," Harrison believes that it "eschews sentimentality" with its "exploration of female courage and determination" (141). While Gervaise "becomes mute in her alcoholic madness" prior to her death, Pennyloaf, "free from male repression. . . emerges from the silence of her suffering," finding "a sanctuary in the 'humble security' of female companionship" (141).

Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), alongside Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), Steve Martin's *Shopgirl* (2000), and James Tissot's painting of 1883–85, "La Demoiselle de Magasin," provide an illuminating, comparative framework for Adrienne Munich's subtle investigation of Gissing's treatment in *The Odd Women* of the shopgirl. While Tissot's painting "brilliantly records the confidence and knowledge available to the Parisian

shopgirl" (147), Gissing "offers to Monica no awe of consumer pleasure" and refuses her "shopgirl knowledge" (147). Gissing's emphasis on the "grim necessity"of her punishing work at Scotchers & Co. (no ultra-modern department store, this) "allows him no textual space to discover for Monica traces of urban commodity desire" (148). For Munich, "Gissing is absorbed with commerce, but he refuses to legitimate and reveal his shopgirl's way of knowing it" (153). Unlike Carrie Meeber in *Sister Carrie*, Monica's walking in public space "does not express a flame of motivating envy" (151) but is tied "to her seduction" (149). Gissing's "refusal" of Monica's exposure to consumerist modernity is countered in Munich's account by Monica's exposure to Gissing's ironic, taboo plot. Here Munich's analysis joins hands with the essays by Patterson and Jann in this volume: the overdetermining influence on Gissing of a middle-class commitment to standards of decorum, respectability, and refinement as moral signifiers is clear enough—and sharpened further through alert, comparativist readings such as these.

One of the very few New Woman novels that seems to have elicited any comment from Gissing was May Sinclair's *Audrey Craven*, as Diana Maltz observes in her chapter, "The Solipsistic Heroine in 1897," in which she forges subtle links between Sinclair's novel and Gissing's *The Whirlpool*. Gissing, writes Maltz, liked "the taste of irony" in Sinclair's presentation of "a narcissistic personality woman who cannot grasp the concept of compassion" (183) and whose "inner life" is a "vacuum" (172). Maltz points out that opportunities for Audrey's

"reflection and renunciation" (172) are cut short by the intrusion of Sinclair's narrative voice and that it may have been "this thwarting, this futility which fascinated Gissing" (172). Maltz proceeds to draw interesting parallels with *The Whirlpool* which Gissing "completed three months before reading Sinclair's book" (173). Both Audrey and Alma Rolfe are "complict in the commercialized world of art and oblivious to art's transcendent qualities" (172). More sociologically ambitious than Sinclair's novel, *The Whirpool* locates "the defects of personal character in the failures of late Victorian society" (174). But it can be differentiated also in its neo-tragic colouring. Whereas in *Audrey Craven* there is a female figure, Katherine, who, as Maltz puts it, "plays a foil to Audrey" in her "common sense and conscience" (183), there is no responsible "foil" for Alma (even Hedda has, for a time, her Thea). Alma is tragically alone, beyond the help of her half-comprehending husband, and fatally subject to a roll-call of insidious, forceful figures—Dymes, Redgrave, Sybil Carnaby, and Mrs Strangeways. The readerly protection, prompted by the effect of the tragic, that we might want to extend to Alma seems quite absent in our encounter with Audrey.

M. D. Allen's essay traces intertextual connections between *Born in Exile* (1892) and Paul Bourget's *Le Disciple* (1889), reminding us that "Gissing's knowledge of French literature, although often acknowledged, has never been the subject of sustained attention" (187). Allen convincingly shows that behind *Born in Exile*, and, indeed, *New Grub Street*, lie Balzac's *Illusions Perdues*, Stendhal's *Le Rouge et Le Noir* and "the *locus classicus* of

religious hypocrisy," Molière's *Tartuffe* (190). Allen identifies compelling parallels between the aspirations of Godwin Peak and the aspiring student of philosophy Robert Greslou in *Le Disciple*, pointing to similar tropes: an attractive family with which the protagonist wishes to affiliate, the presence of a conventional male rival, and the lure of the beautiful, virtuous female object of desire. Both Peak and Greslou share an "unmoored intellectual arrogance" and "class-consciousness" (191). Moroever, Bourget's own interest in ideas of "multiple personality" has a direct relevance to Gissing's characterisation of Peak's divided self.

Both Peak and Greslou, in the editors' words, "become sexually dependent on women whose social territory they invade, so introducing a tragicomic variant in the representation of hegemonic masculinity" (8). But significantly the two novels depart from each other in aesthetic terms. *Born in Exile* eschews the melodramatic plotting of Bourget's novel, "nor," as Allen writes, "could . . . [Gissing] avail himself of the candour in sexual matters from which the Frenchman profited" (194). Again, close comparative inspection opens the territory of aesthetic constraints for a writer like Gissing—constraints always conditioned by social and cultural codes, so powerfully felt in Gissing's case, and brought to light through the essays in this volume.-William Greenslade, University of the West of England

Giovanna Ceserani. *Italy's Lost Greece : Magna Graecia and the Making of Modern Archaeology.* New York: OUP, 2012.

Would George Gissing, on his long trip *By the Ionian Sea*, in late 1897, have wished to swap the voluminous copy of François Lenormant's *La Grande-Grèce. Paysages et histoire* he carried with him, for this new publication on Magna Graecia ? We may assume so, if weight alone were one sufficient reason—and yet this hypothetical question may be answered in the negative, for the simple reason that the books differ quite substantially in their objectives. While Lenormant focused on the landscape, the history, and the people, delivering fascinating descriptions of his human and natural environment in the south, Giovanna Ceserani literally, and in an archaeological sense, digs deeper. Currently an Associate Professor of Classics at Stanford University, she deals with "the history of the history of Magna Graecia . . . by showing how South Italy's distant past has been imagined and used from the renaissance to the present day" (Introduction 2). When the Grand Tour started to become fashionable from c. 1750, the average traveller hardly ever dared set his feet in the region south of Naples (take, for example, Goethe, who altogether skipped what today is called Calabria and Puglia). In the nineteenth century, though, Italy's tip and heel of the boot were, in comparison, more easily accessible than mainland Greece, which for a long time had belonged to the Ottoman Empire, and it was for this reason and because all the ancient remains were so well preserved in Southern Italy, unlike those of Greece itself,

that the influence and importance of the *Mezzogiorno* began to be realised.

When Lenormant visited Magna Graecia in 1879, he did so by train, just as Gissing would several years later; the historical marginalisation of the South (partly to be explained by domestic, geopolitical, and topographical reasons) seemed to be coming to an end, but the North-South divide can be felt and seen, even today, not far from busy, buzzing, Naples. N.B.: To Lenormant, as historian and sociologist, is dedicated a subchapter of a little over nine pages ("Lenormant's Greek South Italy: A Travelogue"), which offers an overview of his academic life and research activities.

In the five chapters of her book—"Discoveries and Rediscoveries," "Between Classical and Marginal," "Individuals and Institutions," "Of Nations and Scholars," "Culture and Excavation,"—Ceserani goes beyond a scenery which for present-day tourists may serve as an attractive and promising landscape (or mind- or culturescape) they can cultivate and dream of at home and without risk. Many of them soul-searchers of a kind, they are not likely immediately to change their perception of Southern Italy—which often enough is a simplistic one (deprived, impoverished, marginalised, exploited), yet not entirely mistaken either—once they have studied Ceserani's findings. Her book, the second publication in Oxford University Press's newly established series *Greeks Overseas*, may not necessarily be an item Gissingites have been waiting for, but it is definitely one for Italophiles with a special interest in intellectual processes, that is, in how

the perception of a culturally influential part of Italy has originated, and has been shaped and ideologically utilised. The matter is a complex one, its reading requires some effort and persistence, but it is highly rewarding in that it allows us to gain some insights into the making of history. Gissingites, however, will certainly marvel at two illustrations, the first being "A view of the ruins of the temple of Hera at Metaponto" (1783), the second showing "Ruins of the Tavole Palatine, the Temple of Hera, at Metaponto" (1833), reminding them of Gissing's fine and detailed description of this ancient site in his travelogue.- Wulfhard Stahl, Bern

Notes and News

Allen, M. D. "London: The Vision of Dickens and George Gissing." Read at the Nineteenth Annual Dickens Society Symposium, Domaine de Sagnes, Béziers, France, 8 July, 2014.

The Gissing Journal has been mentioned twice by "J.C." of the *TLS,* long a friendly commentator, in recent months. On 7 February, 2014, to our regret, "J.C." announced his decision to end his subscription due to the perceived difficulties of paying electronically (p. 32). The delightful paragraphs in which he later announced a change of mind are, we believe, worth quoting almost *in toto*: "Earlier in the year, we wrote about our decision to discontinue our subscription to the *Gissing Journal*. . . . The office has moved from Bradford to Wisconsin; the renewal price is requested in dollars. 'As it happens,' we wrote, 'we possess no dollar chequebook.' Financial transactions via

the internet don't appeal to all Gissing readers./Then there arrived a letter from the new editor, M. D. Allen of University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley, with an offer to melt any stubborn, unsubscribing heart. 'J.C. has been kind to the *Gissing Journal* over the years and is kind in his last piece, praising the interest of the *Journal*'s style, its unpretentious content, and its inexpensiveness. I would like to give him the opportunity to continue so being and am therefore delighted to grant him a free subscription in perpetuity.'/Frankly, Mr. Allen, we don't deserve it. We know you do not intend to use the generous gambit as a lever, but we must refuse. The *Gissing Journal* will continue to drop through our letterbox with a welcome plop on the doormat; by then, however, we will have joined the progressive set and mastered Paypal" (2 May, 2014, p. 32).

Some subscribers may know more about the Idler Academy than does your editor. It is to be found in Westbourne Park Road in London W2 and rates four stars out of five on www.yelp.com, where it is described by one visitor as a "Great independent modern coffee house with an interesting flux of intellectual types passing regularly through." On 9 February 2014, Richard Adams gave a talk there entitled "The History of the Christmas Story." Apparently Adams and the writer John Michell, ("one of the most brilliant men in England": Kathleen Raine) began in 1983 to put together for their friends booklets *in lieu* of increasingly expensive Christmas cards: these were "literally thrown together, photocopied, stapled, trimmed and stuffed into envelopes, addressed and stamped, then shoved into the pillar box in the hope [they] would arrive

at Christmas in the nick of time." The booklets would reprint short stories, "the one feature common to them all [being] they had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with Christmas!" On half a dozen occasions between 1983 and 2013 Gissing was the chosen author. For example, the 1987 booklet featured "Fate and the Apothecary"; 2007 saw the appearance of "The Prize Lodger," and the next year "The Fate of Humphrey Snell." Gissing's contributions proved to be "the most popular and remarked upon" by Adams' and Michell's friends, perhaps because, as Michell wrote in the introduction to the 1987 offering, "the more Gissing insists on the supremacy of misery the more one is inclined to see the opposite, and even to laugh at the paradox." Adams' talk, delivered on Michell's birthday (he had died in 2009), includes details of their friendship with Pierre and Hélène Coustillas. An interesting sidelight on Gissing's reputation! (Thanks to Hélène Coustillas for this item.)

An exhibition is being held in Barnsley, South Yorkshire, at the Cooper Gallery, featuring forgotten and unknown local artists. It started on 7 June and is due to run until 30 August, from ten to four on weekdays, and ten to three on Sundays. The organisers, Barnsley Art on your Doorstep, having discovered Gissing's friend, the Barnsley-born John Wood Shortridge, in the long article devoted to him by Pierre Coustillas and Russell Price in the issues of *The Gissing Journal* for July and October 1999 are eager to show some specimens of his work. Shortridge's descendants in New Zealand have been willing to cooperate and have sent pictures. So the man Gissing considered "a born artist" but who never sold or exhibited

Capri

anything is for the first time appearing before the public. Illustrated here is "Capri." (Thanks to Hélène Coustillas and Tony Petyt for this item.)

Recent Publications

I am grateful to Hélène Coustillas, Christine Huguet, Rebecca Hutcheon, Tom Ue, and Martha Vogeler for contributions to the following.

Anon. "The Reading Room Can Save Its Soul by Telling Its Own Story." *The Daily Telegraph* 4 July, 2014. Brief mention.

Chialant, Maria Teresa, trans., intro., and notes. *Il fuoco sotto la cenere [Sleeping Fires]*. Rome: Aracne, 2014.

DeVine, Christine. "George Gissing's Problems with Women." Rev. of *George Gissing and the Woman Question: Convention and Dissent*, eds. Christine Huguet and Simon J. James. *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 10.1 (Spring).

Grylls, David. Etude critique. Rev. of *The Heroic Life of George Gissing*, Parts I, II, and III, by Pierre Coustillas. *Etudes Anglaises* 67.1 (2014): 115-121.

Huguet, Christine. Rev. of *Collected Short Stories: George Gissing,* ed. Pierre Coustillas, with the assistance of Barbara Rawlinson and Hélène Coustillas. *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* 79 (Spring 2014).

-----. Rev. of *The Heroic Life of George Gissing*, Parts II and III, by Pierre Coustillas. *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* 79 (Spring 2014).

"J.C." *TLS* 6 June, 2014: 32. Brief reference.

James, Simon J. Rev. of *The Heroic Life of George Gissing*, 3 vols., by Pierre Coustillas. *Victorian Studies* 56.3 (Spring 2014): 559-61.

Knox, Marisa Palacois. "'The Valley of the Shadow of Books': George Gissing, New Women, and Morbid Literary Detachment." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 69.1 (June 2014): 92-122.

McCrum, Robert. "The 100 Best Novels: No. 28—*New Grub Street* by George Gissing (1891)." *The Guardian*, 31 March, 2014.

Taylor, D.J. "From Hero to Zero." *The Guardian* 10 May, 2014: 15.

White, Jerry, ed. *London Stories*. New York: Knopf, 2014. Contains "Christopherson," pp. 207-27.

Wilson, A.N. Rev. of *Everyman's Castle*, by Philippa Lewis. *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 June, 2014. Brief mention of Cyrus Redgrave and his Wimbledon bungalow.

Dr. Ying Ying of Shanghai International Studies University and Hangzhou Normal University has an article

forthcoming in *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* entitled "The Reception of George Gissing in China." I have excerpted the following items from her bibliography, under the impression that they will be known to few, if any, Western students of Gissing. The first three items are translations of Gissing into Chinese; the rest are critical responses to him, again in Chinese. (A brief account of Dr. Ying's 2013 Ph.D. dissertation will be found elsewhere in this issue.)

Fu Yan, trans. "Christopherson." *Art and Life* 17 (1941): 9-13.

Houkun Zhu, trans. *Will Warburton.* Shanghai: Culture Association, 1949.

Yitang Zheng, trans. *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* Changsha: Hunan Literature and Art Publishing House, 1992.

Bingna Zhai. "A Confrontation between Poverty and Dignity in 'A Daughter of the Lodge.'" *Writers* 4 (2013): 87-88.

Bingxian Jiang. "On George Gissing's Essays—An Appraisal of a Modern British Writer." *Federal Weekly* 9.25 (1946): 457-60.

Jincai Yang. "The Victorian Fiction that Reproduces the Mindset of Single Girls." *Collection of Women's Studies* 47.4 (2002): 46-52.

Hongshi Xue. "On Gissing's *New Grub Street.*" *Foreign Literature Review* 3 (1993): 108-14.

-----. "A Study of George Gissing's Early Novels." *A New Start of Transcending Tradition.* Ed. Meihui Wen. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1995: 156-86.

-----. "On Gissing's Political Novel *Demos.*" *Foreign Literature Review* 3 (1995): 102-109.

Qiping Yin. "The Implications of the 'Train' in *New Grub Street.*" *Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages* 26.1 (2003): 82-85.

Wenchao Cheng. "Expression and Transcending: At that Moment of Life—Gissing's *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.*" *Foreign Literature Studies* 2 (1987): 141-2.

Xiaodong Wang. "Conservative Ideas of an Old-Style British Man of Letters in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.*" *Overseas English 4 (2013): 187-89.*

Xiaolan Chen. "Literature and Market—George Gissing's City Concept and Cultural Imagination." *Journal of Shanghai University* 29.5 (2012): 90-97.

Ying Ying. "The British Museum Reading Room and 'Dwellers in the Valley of the Shadow of Books': The Crisis of Writers' Survival in *New Grub Street.*" *Journal of Zhejiang International Studies University* 1 (2012): 45-50.

-----. "Vacillation between Repulsion and Sympathy" A Study on George Gissing's Slum Novels." *Journal of Hangzhou Dianzi University* 8.1 (2012): 37-41.

-----. "An Interpretation of the 'Fog' in *New Grub Street.*" *Foreign Literature Studies* 35.1 (2013): 94-100.

-----. "Eco-Anxiety in *The Private Papers of Henry Rycroft.*" *Journal of Hangzhou Normal University* 35.2 (2013): 123-27.

-----. "For Whom the Bell Tolls": The Cultural Symbolization of the Church Clock in *New Grub Street.*" *English and American Literary Studies.* Ed. Weiping Li. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, (2014): 106-18.

Zaixiang Yao. "On George Gissing's *New Grub Street.*" *Journal of Hangzhou University* 18.2 (1988): 81-87.

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Information for Contributors

The Gissing Journal publishes essays and notes on Gissing and his circle. Contributions may deal with biographical, critical, bibliographical, and topographical subjects. They should be sent to the editor, Professor M. D. Allen, University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley, 1478 Midway Road, Menasha, WI 54952-1297, USA, or by e-mail to **malcolm.allen@uwc.edu**.

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